

2020

Investigating the Potential of Ancient Religious Sites in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhido Church for Religious Tourism Development: The Case of Kirstos Semra

Dagnachew Nega

Debre Tabor University, dagnachew_nega@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp>



Part of the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nega, Dagnachew (2020) "Investigating the Potential of Ancient Religious Sites in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhido Church for Religious Tourism Development: The Case of Kirstos Semra," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 8: Iss. 4, Article 7.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/258d-hh58>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol8/iss4/7>

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).

Investigating the Potential of Ancient Religious Sites in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhido Church for Religious Tourism Development: The Case of Kirstos Semra

Dagnachew Nega

Debre Tabor University

dagnachew_nega@yahoo.com

Though Ethiopia is endowed with a variety of religious tourism, its potential hasn't been outlined, managed and used for the development of tourism. Kirstos Semra and its surroundings is one of the most outstanding sites and this study has a general objective of assessing the potential of the site and its surroundings for religious tourism. Descriptive design is employed as a methodology; to collect data, both primary and secondary sources are employed. Respondents were selected through convenience and purposively sampling methods, and in addition, content analysis was undertaken. Findings proved that religious festivals, ancient religious treasures and ancient monasteries are only some of the religious potential of the religious sites. To enhance religious tourism and sustainably develop general cultural tourism, all tourism stakeholders should strive to work together effectively.

Key Words: monastery, potential, Kirstos Semra, religious tourists

Introduction

Since 2007, religious tourism is considered to be the fastest growing tourism product (UNWTO, 2014). According to estimates by the World Tourism Organization, 300-330 million international tourists visit the most important religious monuments in the world every year, approximately 600 million national and international religious trips are made globally and of these, 40% occur in Europe. These are particularly important trips, as not only do they contribute to the economic development of a place but they also foster mutual understanding and respect between different cultures (UNWTO, 2014).

Nowadays, people are travelling to sacred destinations not only driven by religious and spiritual motivations or to experience the sacred and traditional meaning of another religion, but also for nostalgic reasons, educational purposes, out of mere curiosity and looking for genuine experiences. They seek to engage with the religious representatives or pilgrims participating in various rites, searching to experience 'a sense of the place' or a sacred environment (Shackley, 2002).

Ethiopia is known as the home of two major world religions: Christianity and Islam. Religious tourism or travel to religious sites is encouraged and constitutes the largest share of domestic tourism in the country. Travel for annual Saint festivals and for spending fasting seasons while praying in monasteries are the most common practices of religious followers. Famous religious sites in Ethiopia have been visited and

promoted for their historical and archaeological value more than for their religious importance; examples of this are Axum and Lalibela. Religious festivals such as *Mesqel* and *Timket* are promoted for their religious tourism importance. However, for domestic (religious) tourists, religious sites are the main attraction (Ermias, 2014).

The South Gondar Zone has a broad range of natural and cultural tourism heritage which can draw many domestic and foreign tourists from different corners of the world. There are a lots of tourism types which provide many benefits to the local communities in the region and to the country as a whole. In the South Gondar Zone, potential tourism resources exist such as:

- Nature based tourism visits to Guna mountain,
- Water tourism as in parts of lake Tana,
- Health and spa tourism in Wanzaye Spring Water,
- Cultural / industrial heritage at Gafat Industrial Village and ,
- Religious tourism at sites such as, Betlehem Church, Wukro Medihanlealm Rock Hewn Church, Tana Chirkos Monastery, Adyame Yordanos Wonkshet Monastery.

These promising sites should receive appropriate attention (SGCTO, 2015; Dagnachew, 2018; 2019).

Identifying religious practices, outlining the challenges through time and indicating the best opportunities and using them all for the development of religious tourism with the help of different tourism stakeholders has not been seen in Ethiopia.

Currently the Monastery of Kirstos Semra and its surroundings is becoming the most important scared place at which religious tourism activities are practiced. However, while it is one of the most important sites of religious tourism practice, no research has been yet been undertaken on the site or its surroundings. The potential that Kirstos Semra and its surroundings is endowed with, means a lot could be done. The monastery should be able to stand among the great sites of the globe. However, dealing with current practices while working towards future potential for religious tourism development in the site has been poor. How can it be that a site full of remarkable and outstanding religious tourism potential remains so unexplored as a destination ?

Mindful of this challenge, the general objective of this study is to identify the religious potential of Kirstos Semra and its surroundings for development of religious tourism.

Method and Materials

Description of the study area

Kirstos Semra Monastery, and Tana Chirkos Monastery (and others such as Yared Monastery) are found in Fogera and Dera Woredas, on islands to the east of Lake Tana. These monasteries are approximately 22 km from Woreta (Wereta) Town (Hagerie Media &SGZCTO, 2015). The natural topography of the area is spectacular. A varied landscape is evident in the area: plateau, mountains, plain, lakes, rivers green and fertile land area. There are many followers of different religions in the Woreda - Muslim, Orthodox, Protestant and others are to be found. However, in the zone, the dominant religion is the Orthodox Tewahido religion (Hagerie Media &SGZCTO, 2015).

Study design and research approach

For this particular study, descriptive design was selected to provide answers to the questions of this research problem at the monastery. It was used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon and to describe what exists with respect to variables or conditions in the current situation

Map 1: Location of Lake Tana in Ethiopia



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/Ethiopia_Physiography.jpg

Map 2: Study Sites on Islands to the East of Lake Tana



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/84/Lake_tana.jpg

(Creswell, 2003). In order to gain the advantages of both and to offset the discrepancies of each, the researchers conducted qualitative research to gather information through different data instruments. It is understood that potential is much easier to explore through qualitative approaches than through numerical approaches.

The study population, sampling design and its technique

The target population in the study was the religious leaders in the monastery, leaders in the wider, Woreda culture and tourism office experts, and *Bête Kihinet* office leaders. Using this frame of reference, the researcher attained good respondents using purposive sampling methods. The individual cases were selected on the basis of their characteristics or experiences and ability to answer the research questions, and thus, allow the researcher to study the research topic in-depth (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Considering the target population, a total of 25 respondents were asked to answer the research questions.

Types of data

For the purpose of this research, data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Hox and Boejj (2005) suggest that primary data are original material collected for a specific research goal. Secondary data, however, is originally collected for a different purpose and repurposed. According to Kothari (2004) primary data are collected by using techniques like interviews, focus group discussion, field observation and photography whereas secondary data refers to documents that have been organised by someone else, such as books, magazines, research reports, journal article etc. Thus, the in this study in-depth interviews, field observation, focus group discussion, books, magazines, research reports and articles will all be used, based on their level of relevance and use.

Data Analysis and Interpretation - Tangible Cultural

Tana Chirkos Monastery

Tana Chirkos is an island in the eastern part of Lake Tana in Ethiopia, near the mouth of the Gumara River (coordinates: 11°51'49"N 37°29'27"E). Lake Tana is the largest lake in Ethiopia, and the source of the Blue Nile. Tana Chirkos is considered a holy island, and only monks live there. The monastery is surrounded by

Figure 1: Tana Chirkos Monastery



Source: Author, 2019

ancient flora and endemic fauna. It is a site of miraculous religious practices and treasures which means the monastery is visited throughout the year by researchers, tourists, scholars and a broad range of religious tourists. One of the informant monks from the monastery stated the following

Exploring this monastery is like exploring the hidden world. A lot is found here. Ethiopia's past, present and future events are expected to be found from the parchments, gospels and other religious treasures of the monastery. It is the home of wisdom which should be preserved, conserved and utilized scientifically.

Kirsots Semra Monastery

Kirsots Semra Monastery is situated on the island of Guangut, near to Tana Chirkos Monastery. An interview with priest Hail Maryam stated that this monastery was first built by St. Kirstos Semra in the 12th century. As noted by the priest, the present church was reconstructed in 1994. Priest Hail Maryam stated:

Figure 2: Kirstos Semra Monastery



Source: Author, 2019

What a very spectacular monastery it is. When compare it to other monasteries in Ethiopia, it is unique as she is dedicated for females. What makes it unique is, the monastery is the only [one] which is named ... Kirstos Semra in the world [it is] unlike others.

Other Religious Sites

A number of other holy sites are located in this region. On which was identified during our research is Rema Medihanealm Monastery which was established by Abune Nob during the time in power of Emperor Yishaq (1414- 1429). This site was reconstructed by Susenyos in the 17th century. In-depth interviews reveal that even though this monastery is one of the ancient monasteries of Ethiopia, it is not highly visited like other local sites. However, it is similarly endowed with many natural and cultural resources to be explored by tourists from different corners of the world. For the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on Tana Chirkos and Kirstos Semra.

Religious Treasures

Observation, interview and Focus Group discussion reveal that these monasteries have lots of religious treasures to be visited. Especially the Tana Chirkos Monastery, where their most famous religious treasures are put in the museum and are openly accessible for visitors. As per the triangulation of various data, the following are the most important religious treasures in the study areas.

Ark of the Covenant

The Ark of the Covenant, also known as the Ark of the Testimony, is a gold-covered wooden chest described in the Book of Exodus as containing the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. According to various texts within the Hebrew Bible, it also contained Aaron's rod. When carried the Ark was always hidden under a large veil made of skins and blue cloth, always carefully concealed, even from the eyes of the priests and the Levites who carried it. God was said to have spoken with Moses from between the two cherubim on the Ark's cover. When at rest, a tabernacle was set up and the holy Ark was placed under a veil of covering, with staves passing through the side bars to hold it up off the ground. Moses instructed Bezalel and Oholiab to construct the Ark, in the book of Deuteronomy, however, in other reports, the Ark is said to have been built by Moses himself without reference to Bezalel or Oholiab. The Book of Exodus gives detailed instructions on how the Ark is constructed; 2½ cubits

in length, 1½ in breadth, and 1½ in height.

Many religious tourists come to visit Tana Chirkos every year to see the site where Ark of the Covenant was kept for about 800 years, before being moved to Mary of Zion Church in Axum where it is now found.

Tana Chirkos Monastery Museum

There are many religious items and instruments in Tana Chirkos Monastery Museum and other surrounding church sites (Mengistu, 2010; as cited in Zelalem, 2013). Religious items are usually linked to biblical meanings and their usage and significance has a great value for religious tourism development. Tana Chirkos Monastery has its own museum with many religious treasures on display. It is always open for tourists. In line with the theoretical objective of a museum, which is to display and exhibit anything that is put in place in order that it may readily be seen, the exhibits in this site include a collection of fascinating objects of public interest, in addition to the telling of stories linked to different religious services and items (Farhat, *et al.*, 2016).

Vestments - these are robes which are blessed by the church and are the uniform of the priest when serving their functions. There are several items on display, which are worn by the priests at different celebration; Alb (*Qamis*), Girdle (*Zenar*) and Cape (*Qob*).

Church Bells - The bell of a church is important. It is rung for a variety of purposes, and can be heard loudly throughout the compound of the monastery. Bells are used to call worshippers to the church for communal service, and to announce times of daily prayer (interview with monk on March, 2019).

Figure 3: Tana Chirkos Museum



Source: Author, 2019

Staff - This religious item is usually used by every religious person. It is prepared from a cross shaped stick which has both symbolic and practical purpose. In addition to its function as a crucifix, it supports aged religious fathers during long prayers and their various religious activities. Like any other religious item, these, praying sticks are one of the items with potential for religious tourism in the monasteries.

Sistrum / cymbal - The Sistrum is a type of religious musical instrument which is used in different activities of the church. Especially during hymns, the sistrum is played. It consists of a lyre shaped metallic frame with a wooden handle. There are two bars running from one side to other side of the lyre.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals (Psalms 150:5).

Drum: This is one of the religious musical instruments which is highly used in church festivals and different activities. It is one of the religious treasures found in the monastery museum. They are made of light, strong and pest resistant wood and covered with animal skin and glorious cloth. It is considered to be the symbol of Jesus Christ.

As per the information provided by the monk, the monastery museum was built for the a number of reasons.

Figure 4: Kirstos Semra Museum



Source: Author, 2019

- It gives economic value in the form of religious tourism development for the monastery,
- It is the way to preserve the religious treasures of the monastery for future generations,
- It is a way to interpret the meanings, symbols, and usage of artefacts for religious tourists
- It promotes feelings of pride in what we have.

The museum guide also stated that many religious treasures are placed in the museum particularly to attract visitors, and this will continue into the future. Kinfe Abrha's 2015 investigation of religious tourism

Figure 5: St. Mary footprint at Tana Chirkos Monastery



Source: Author, 2019

at Aksum city, proposed in his study that a museum is one of the basic elements of potential for religious tourism development.

Kirstos Semra Museum

Kirstos Semra Museum is very small and very few religious treasures. However, the religious fathers stated that most of the religious treasures at the store house were gifted by the Asmera peoples from Eritrea. There is large hall which was built more than 20 years ago and is linked to Asmera religious groups. Today due to the good diplomacy between Ethiopian and Eritrean religious groups, there is a program to come here during the annual religious festivals of Kirstos Semra.

St. Mary's Foot print at Tana Chirkos monastery

It is believed that St. Mary stayed at the site that is now Tana Chirkos Monastery, for about three months. Those at the monastery state that there is evidence of St. Mary's footprint at the small hill of the monastery. This is one of the most important potentials for the monastery (see Figure 5), and draws many domestic and international tourists.

Monastic Life and Activities

Another important potential of religious tourism at the study area is monastic life and the practices of the religious members of communities. Observation and in-depth interviews explored the activities of male and female monks who undertake daily task in the monasteries. The term monasticism is derived from the Greek word *mono's* means single. It is a form of leaving the world, in order to discard in solitude all desires and temptations and to devote oneself to pursuing inner perfection (Błaśewicz, 1999). As per the interviews, informants noted that, all monks in the monastery have their own responsibilities which are performed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Monasticism was practiced by the members of the first Christian communities. Evidence of this in the holy Bible, is provided in the Acts of the Apostles:

The first Christians spent their time learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and prayers. All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts (Acts 2, 42 & 44-46).

Figure 6: Dairy Farm and fattening activities with monks of Tana Chirkos monastery



Source: Author, 2019

In another sections of the holy Bible,

The group of believers was one in mind and heart. No one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another everything they had. There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale, and hand it over to the apostles... (Acts 4, 32 & 34-35).

As depicted above and evidenced through observation, every monk is busy doing many activities. There is no rest from monastic activities - monks in the monasteries are dairy farming, fattening cattle, goat rearing, beekeeping, selling fruit, making carpets, shopping, making textiles and garments, working on monastery infrastructure, preaching, managing and serving religious tourists, documenting, promoting and marketing the activities of others and even managing finance. The monastery through a variety of means is keeping its monks active, to generate income for further religious development.

Religious Festivals

There is a number of religious festivals which are celebrated annually in the monasteries in the study area. During the annual festivals of the monasteries, many activities occur. Observation during these festivals noted the importance of the religious programs start on the eve of the holy day and include preaching by religious fathers who come from different places, spiritual songs by Sunday School students, night time candle events, the reading of poems and literatures by religious visitors, and holy mass at the end of the program (see Dagnachew, 2019). There are

Figure 7: Kirstos Semra Monastery annual festival

Source: Author, 2019

some very interesting events which are held during the celebration of holy days and the following are the most attractive festivals with potential for religious tourism:

The annual Chirkos religious festival. It is one of the most famous religious festivals held at the ancient monastery. It is held on *Tir* 15 (January 24) at Tana Chirkos Monastery. Large numbers of Religious tourists come for this event.

The annual Kirstos Semra religious festival. This is the most famous religious festivals held only at Saint Kirstos Semra Monastery. It is celebrated on *Ginbot* 12 (May 20) and *Nehase* 24 (August 30).

History of Saint Kirstos Semra

To truly understand the religious significance of these sites it is important to know a little about Kirstos Semra. The following information was provided by the monks, and is based on the well accepted hagiographies of the saint.

Saint Kirstos Semra was born in Shewa Region, Bulga Province, Ethiopia in a place called Saint Gaye. There were two affluent couples in this area; the husband was Dersani and the wife was Eleni. Both were generous and God fearing. They gave birth to Kirstos Semra whom they nurtured, teaching her God's laws and norms. When she reached the age of maturity, they got her married off to Semre Giorgis. He was rich and loved Kirstos Semra who was very beautiful. Her Father in law Eyesus Moa prophesised that she had been 'chosen' for a big purpose and always respected her like our Lady. She had eleven children with her husband; nine boys and two girls. The king during her time was Atse Gebremeskel who heard about her amazing ethics and reputation, and he loved and

respect her. Asking her to remember him in her prayers, King Gebremeskel sent her many gifts - servants, horse, mule, clothes and shoes made of gold. She did not like the gifts; she preferred for them to be sold and the money given to the needy and the Church.

One day, the head of angles, the Archangel Saint Michael appeared in front of her with three breads. She asked her servants to bring her the bread, but none were able to see what she saw. The Archangel said to her 'eat this Kirstos Semra, this was given to you by the generosity of our God'. She ate it and did not eat or drink for three days after that as the Holy Spirit had dwelled on her.

She had a servant who had a very bad manner. One day she was annoyed and angered by this servant, so she sent flames into the servant's mouth. Her servant died. Then Saint Kirstos Semara started to cry and seek forgiveness from God. She prayed to God and promised to leave her wealth and family aside if god reunited the dead woman's body and soul. Her prayer was answered and the woman that died was resurrected. She believed that she should carry out what she had promised to her God.

She continued her prayers citing from the Psalms of David and Saint Yared, and joined Debre Libanos Females Monastery where, she was blessed and praised by God.

One day the Archangel Michael took Saint Kirstos Semra to the island of Tana, in Northern Ethiopia.

Figure 8: St. Kirstos Semra

St. Kirstos Semre Gospel, 2019

There, she spent 12 years standing and praying in the sea until her body had holes where fishes could flow. After 12 years of standing in the sea, Jesus Christ came to her. Jesus promised her that when she died, he would send her Angels and his Mother, Mary. The Virgin Mary also visited her (interview with *Melak Mihiret* on April 20,2019; St. Kirstos Semra Gospel).

There was a man called Makebe Egzioo who used to live next to Tana Lake. This man had denied Jesus Christ and was advised to use a herb that would protect him from dangers and all hardships of this world. However, one day this man confessed to Kirstos Semra about his acts and informed her that he sought for forgiveness from God in her name.

Saint Kirstos Semra duly prayed to God to forgive him but Jesus said that the man denied Him and used a herb for devilish purposes. She said to Him ‘You created the herbs, so destroy the Herbs and save his soul please’. God listened to her prayers and forgave the man. Similarly, she had prayed for other sinners and received forgiveness for them from God.

She had frequent contact with God. And on her death, her soul was taken by St. Michael to Jesus and , God promised that she could save souls from hell. He also told her that he would not forgive those who do not believe in the miracles of holy people and saints.

She returned to earth and her flesh and soul were reunited by St. Michael the Archangel. She also travelled to visit St. Lalibela in Roha (Interview with

Melak Mihiret on April 20,2019; St. Kirstos Semra Gospel).

Natural Potential for Religious Tourism Development

Lake Tana

Lake Dana is the source of the Blue Nile and is the largest lake in Ethiopia. The lake is fed by the Lesser Abay, Reb and Gumara rivers and its surface area ranges from 3,000 to 3,500 km² depending on season and rainfall. The lake was formed by volcanic activity and has a number of islands, whose number varies depending on the level - which has fallen by about 6 feet in the last 400 years. When James Bruce visited the area in the late 18th century, he noted that the locals counted 45 inhabited islands. A 20th-century geographer identified 37 islands, of which he believed 19 had monasteries or churches on them. Remains of ancient Ethiopian emperors and treasures of the Ethiopian Church are kept in many of the isolated island monasteries, in particular on the island of Tana Qirqos.

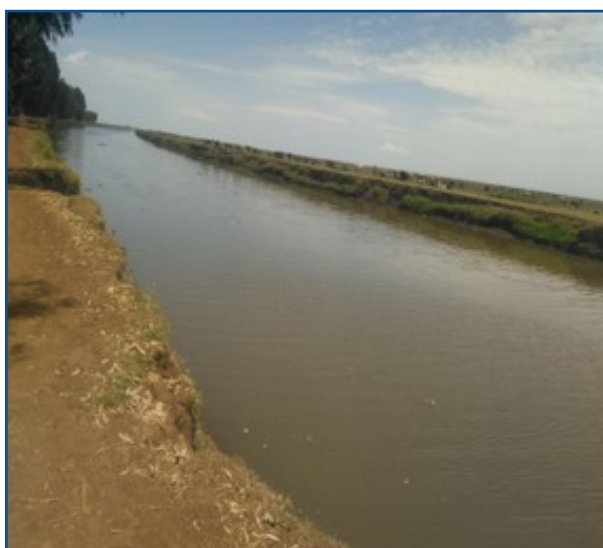
Endemic bird and animals

A unique habitat Located in north-western Ethiopia, the Lake is a watershed with multiple rivers and wetlands - it is a biodiversity hotspot. The region has global significance as a habitat for aquatic and migratory birds and animals - Hippopotamus, crocodile, monitor lizard, rare fish, and nearly 300 bird

Figure 9: View of Lake Tana monastery at Tana Chirkos



Source: Author, 2019

Figure 10: Gumara River nearby Kirstos Semra

Source: Author, 2019

species live in Lake Tana's surroundings. The marshes and shallow-water areas of the lake are crucial habitats for many European migratory bird species including the northern pintail, the northern shoveller and the black-tailed godwit. Rare bird species like the wattled crane, the lesser jacana, and the endemic yellow-fronted parrot also breed here.

Natural forest

Being located on an island makes Tana Chirkos Monastery and its surroundings highly endowed with natural forest. The monastery has a great power to motivate religious tourists to appreciate and understand about the potential resources of natural forests and their religious significance. A significant number of global religious pilgrim sites are connected to mountain ranges or hills and pilgrims often regard the journey they take as a physical manifestation of an inner spiritual journey, with the path travelled being a framework for the travel within (Hall, 2006).. The journey to these monasteries and the transportation to their 'other-world' location is a similar experience.

Trees have great potential for religious sites and religious tourism development - with connection to biblical justifications. The first part of the bible talks about the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis, 2:9) and in addition, in the New Testament, refers to the tree of life as a major feature in Paradise (Revelation, 22: 2, 14). That is why every churches and monasteries are established in locations which are surrounded by forest. Dense forest is the main home of

these religious monks and the source of their food. It is also an appropriate place for prayer. These secure monastery sites are situated far away from the urban world, and experiencing them can be a form of detachment from the materialistic world (Rinschede, 1992).

Gumara River

Gumara river is very long and enters the eastern side of Lake Tana besides the monastery sites. Religious tourists use the river for cleaning and washing their clothes during their stay at the festivals.

Facility potential for Religious Tourism development

Food

At the monastery during the annual festivals, there is no problem of what and where to eat. There are many options. The first is that religious visitors can prepare food themselves. This option is common since most are going to celebrate the festival for one or two days, and they bring their own meals. The second option is that they can buy from local suppliers. There are many mini restaurants available during the festivals. Only money is needed to get what you want.

Parking

There is a very wide plain which is sufficient for both parking and for the celebration of the festivals. Observational research noted that the site can

Figure 11: Food preparation activities during the annual festival



Source: Author, 2019

accommodate more than 100,000 religious visitors at a time. Any types of vehicle can get access to the monastery. Interviews with attendees revealed that even though the place is spacious, there should be facilities in place to assist in finding and identifying where your own car is located.

Figure 12: Parking during the annual festival



Source: Author, 2019

Signposting

Signposting is plentiful, with plentiful provision of information. Some signs indicate directions to where certain services or sites are to be found, and others, indicate how to use certain facilities. Some offer

Figure 13: Signposting at Tana Chirkos Monastery



Source: Author, 2019

religious preaching to the religious tourist, based on Biblical material. Some also indicate the future potential of human beings (see Figure 13).

Conclusion

This study was focused on the potential for religious tourism development linked to sustainable tourism development, with a focus on Kirstos Semra and its surrounding area. Kirstos Semera is endowed with bountiful natural and cultural religious tourism potential. However, in the South Gondar Zone, religious tourism potential is mainly under- or un-explored.

The area not only contains Kirstos Semra Monastery, it is also includes other monasteries like Tana Chirkos, St. Yared Monastery, and others. This study is a first step in proposing that ancient monasteries, religious festivals, potential facilities, religious treasures and natural resources should be explored for religious tourism development - focused on Kirstos Semra and its surrounding.

Recommendations

The research leads to the following recommendations:

- The South Gondar zone culture and tourism office should take on the task of marketing the tourism products which are found in the religious sites.
- Researchers, academics and scholars should explore the religious sites from various perspectives, based on the religious potential explored in this study.
- The local community should preserve and conserve the religious sites and treasures.
- Fogera Woreda Culture and Tourism Office should raise awareness regarding conservation principles for the religious fathers and local communities in relation to the religious sites.
- The tourism office, religious leaders, local communities and all interested stakeholders should work together.
- Religious tourists should be provided with useful and detailed information regarding the ancient religious sites.
- Both domestic and international tourists should follow the religious codes of conduct of the area.
- Local Academic institutions should support the destinations and their products.
- Heritage maintenance should be implemented on treasures which are affected by human and other external factors.
- The local government should provide appropriate funds and planning measures for the conservation of the ancient religious sites and their surroundings.

References

- Blackwell, R. (2007). *Motivations for Religious Tourism, Pilgrimage, Festivals and Events*. In, R. Raj and N. Mo'rpeth, Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals Management: An International Perspective. 35-47.
- Belay, A. (2013). *Challenge and Opportunity of religious tourism at religious site: the case of Gishen Debre Kerbe*.
- Cevallos, M. C. (2016). *Religious Tourism*, degree work to obtain the professional title of National Tourism Guide, Quito-Ecuador.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. (2nd ed). Retrieved from www.isites.harvard.edu.
- Ermias, K. (2014). *Challenges of Religious Tourism Development: The Case of Gishen Mariam*. *Ethiopia American Journal of Tourism Research* Vol. 3, No. 2, 42-57.
- Farhat R., Ummara F., Sundas S. (2016). *Religion Tourism and Entrepreneurial Development (A Case Study Hazrat data Ganj Bakhsh Shrine)*, *South Asian Studies*. A Research Journal of South Asian Studies Vol. 31, No. 1, 275-289.
- Hagre Media & SGZCTO. (2015). *South Gondar Zone Tourism Contents*. hagre media communication private limited company.
- Hox, Joop J and Boeije, Hennie. (2005). *Data Collection Primary vs Secondary*. *Encyclopedia of social measurement*, Vol. I. Retrieved from www.dspace.library.uu.nl.
- Kasim, A. (2011). *Balancing Tourism and Religious Experience: Understanding Devotees' Perspectives on Thaipusam in Batu Caves, Selangor, Malaysia*, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*. 20:3-4, 441-456.
- Kauffmann, A. (2008). *Challenges and Future Perspectives for Tourism Development in the Central Rift Valley, Ethiopia*.
- Koehrsen, J. (2015). *Does Religion Promote Environmental Sustainability? Exploring the role of Religion in Local Energy Transitions*. In: *Social Compass* 62 (3), S. 296-310. DOI: 10.1177/0037768615587808.
- Kothari, C. (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. 2nd edition. New age international publishers. New Delhi, India.
- Lijalem, G. (2014). *Sex Business in Addis Ababa*, Addis Ababa University.
- Melese. (2015). *Contribution and Challenges of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church for Sustainable Tourism Development: in the case of Gondar city*, Gondar university, Ethiopia.
- Mengestu, G. (2008). *Heritage Tourism in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa. Ethiopia.
- Meyer, D. (2004). *Tourism Routes and Gateways; Key Issues for the Development of Tourism Routes and gateway and thier potential for po-poor tourism*.
- Mezmur, T. (2011). *Traditional Education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church And its Potential for Tourism Development (1975-Present)*, Addis Ababa University.
- Nega, D. (2019). *An Investigation of the Religious Tourism Roles for Sustainable Tourism Development: the case of Adyame Yordanos Wonkshet Monastery, Ethiopia*. *African journal of hospitality, tourism and leisure*. Volume 8 (3) - (2019) ISSN: 2223-814. Debre Tabor University, Ethiopia.
- Nega, D. (2019). *The Religious Hospital and its religious tourism trends*. Adyame Yordanos Wonkshet Monastery. Unpublished book. 250 pages. Debre Tabor University, Ethiopia.
- Nega, D. (2019). *Challenges and opportunities of managing festival tourism for sustainable tourism development: The case of Ashendye Festival, North Wollo, Ethiopia*. *African journal of hospitality, tourism and leisure*. Volume 8 (2) - (2019) ISSN: 2223-814 Debre Tabor University, Ethiopia.
- Nicolaides. (2016). *Marian Tourism: Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Pilgrimage*. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* Vol. 5 (4) .
- Nieminen, K. (2009). *Religious Tourism – A Finnish Perspective*. *Master's Thesis*. HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences, Hospitality Management, Helsinki.
- O'Gorman, K. D. (2010). *The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism Good Fellows*, Oxford .
- Pintér, A. R. (2014). *Religious Tourism in Mecca*. Saudi Arabia. Budapest Bussiness school .college of commerce, catering and tourism.
- Puccia, E. (2009). *For Neither Love Nor Money: Gender, Sexuality, and Tourism in Costa Rica*. Graduate School Theses and dissertations. <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/2155>.
- Rinschede, G. (1992). *Forms of Religious Tourism*. *Annals Of Tourism Research*.
- Rob Matthews and liz Ross . (2010). *Research Method a Practical Guide for Social Science*, University of Birmingham. Pearson Education Limited.

- Robinson, B. (2015). *Religions of the world: Information about 40 organized religions and faith groups*. In: *Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*.
- Rodosthenous, P. (2012). *Religious and Pilgrimage Tourism in Cyprus*. Pastoral Approach, Phd Thesis, Thessaloniki, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Theology - Faculty of Theology, (In Greek).
- Rodrigues, A. (2012). *Motivations, Experiences and Potential Impacts of Visitors to a Monastery in New Zealand: a Case Study*. The University of Waikato.
- Sergew, H. (1972). *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian history to 1270* Addis Abeba, United printers.
- Simone-Charteris, M.T & Boyd, S. (2010). *The Development of Religious Heritage Tourism in Northern Ireland: Opportunities, benefits and obstacles*.
- Stausberg, M. (2011). *Religion and Tourism Crossroads, Destinations And Encounters*.
- UNWTO. (2007). *Tourism and Religions: A Contribution to the Dialogue among Religions, Cultures and Civilizations*, Summary of the Report on Córdoba Conference (29-31 October). Córdoba.
- UNWTO. (2014). *Network of Religious Tourism: international conference on tourism and pilgrimage*, project brief held in Spain.
- Vukonic, B. (1998). *Religious Tourism: Economic Value or an Empty Box?*. Zagreb International review of Economics and Business. 83-93.
- Wright, K. (2009). *The New Era of Faith Tourism. Presentation at the Arabian Travel Market* .Dubai,UAE.[https://Books.Google](https://books.google.com). Accessed On November 2017.